



the

COOK-WITTER REPORT

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Happy Birthday Abe!

Two hundred years ago on February 12th, Abraham Lincoln was born to Thomas and Nancy Lincoln in a one-room log cabin near the modern town of Hodgenville, Kentucky. They later moved to Indiana and then Illinois. In March, 1830 the Lincolns, which included his stepmother Sarah Bush Lincoln (who married Thomas Lincoln after Abraham's mother, Nancy, died from "milk sickness"), moved close to what became the city of Decatur.

Lincoln lived and worked in Illinois from that time until February 1861, when he left for Washington, D.C. to become president. He never returned alive. He was laid to rest in Springfield on May 4, 1865.

Lincoln lived slightly more than half of his life in the Prairie State. Here he grew into adulthood, became a lawyer, was elected to office, and rose to national prominence. Understandably, Illinois has more than a little pride when it comes to this man, whom we consider a native son.

That pride is shining brightly this year, the bicentennial of Lincoln's birthday. It will be exhibited at hundreds of events taking place around the state throughout the year to commemorate the Sixteenth President.

The Illinois Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission has a web site (www.lincoln200.net) with a listing of numerous bicentennial events in Illinois. You can search for events by date or location. Here is a small sampling of Lincoln Bicenten-

nial celebrations for February:

February 1, 2009 -- Joliet Area Historical Museum, Joliet

The Museum will open its "Lincoln and Will County during the Civil War" exhibition, to depict Lincoln's connection to the Joliet area, focusing on the involvement of Will County troops, such as the 100th Infantry, Col. Bartleson, and Capt. McAllister. The exhibit runs through June 21, 2009.

February 5, 2009 -- Pritzker Military Library, Chicago

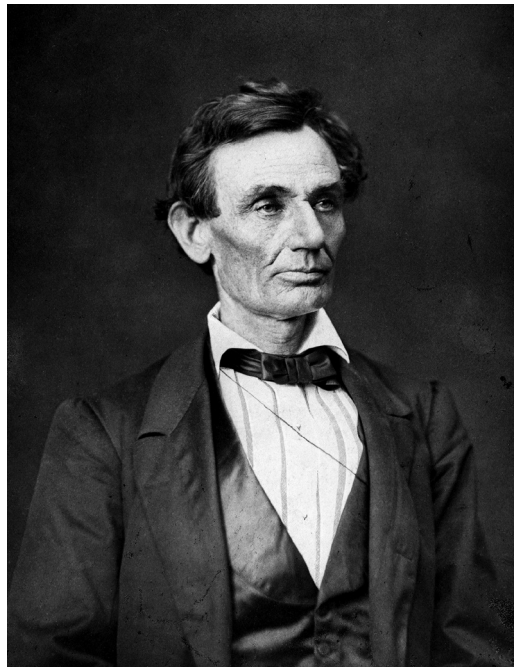
A traveling art exhibit titled "Holding Hands with History" opens today at the library and runs through March 9, 2009. The exhibit features works by Illinois' Artist Laureate, Kay Smith, that celebrate Lincoln's Bicentennial.

February 7, 2009 -- The Newberry Library, Chicago

Historian and former president of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center Spencer Crew will discuss whether African-American abolitionists influenced Lincoln and examine their involvement in the Underground Railroad.

February 9, 2009 -- Governor's Mansion, Springfield

The 10th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry Regiment Band will present a period 1860 Presidential Ball. The band performs in costumes of that time with period instruments.



This 1860 photo of Abraham Lincoln shows him before he grew a beard prior to his first presidential election that November. He did so on the advice of Grace Bedell, an 11-year-old girl from New York. She wrote Lincoln that he would get more votes if he grew a beard because he would look better. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

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This 1940 photo shows a reconstructed cabin that symbolizes the one Lincoln was born in. The cabin is located inside a memorial at the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site in Hodgenville, Kentucky. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

February 11 - 14, 2009 -- Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Springfield

Every day this week, Site Rangers will give talks and present Living History Programs in costume about Lincoln. On February 12, a Lincoln impersonator will tell stories to children and authors of children's books about Lincoln will greet children and sign books. At noon on the Bicentennial day, the Lincoln Trio, a Chicago ensemble, will perform works inspired by Lincoln. Later that day, Lincoln scholars will discuss various aspects of the man. On February 13 and 14, actors portraying Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Abraham Lincoln will discuss freedom, equality and civil rights and take audience members' questions.

February 12, 2009 -- Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site, Lerna

Living history demonstrations will occur throughout the day, so visitors can participate in typical daily chores and activities like Lincoln did when he was a boy. A children's story-time and activities will take place in the Visitor Center at 10am, 1pm, and 3pm.

February 12, 2009 -- Vandalia Statehouse State Historic Site, Vandalia

In the evening, the President of the Vandalia Historical Society and Looking for Lincoln Project Historian will showcase the ten "Looking for Lincoln" wayside exhibits located in Vandalia. Kevin Kaegy will present "The Lincoln Boys in the White House." The Vandalia Statehouse State Historic Site, the oldest capitol building in Illinois, will be illuminated by candles; period music and refreshments will be included.

February 13, 2009 -- 400 East Byron Street theater, Sidney

In a readers theater presentation, actors will present comic and serious stories about meeting Abraham Lincoln in this Creative Dramatics Workshop production. February 13 through 22, 7:30pm on Fridays and Saturdays, 2:30pm

on Sundays.

February 20, 2009 -- Muddy River Opera Company, Quincy

"Abe," a new musical about Lincoln's life between his late teenage years and his departure from



Abraham Lincoln, his wife, and their children lived in this Springfield, Illinois home from 1844 until they left for the White House in 1861. Photo courtesy of the Lincoln Home National Historic Site.

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Springfield for Washington, D.C., makes its world premiere here February 20; it will be performed here again on February 22. In August, the musical will be performed in New Salem as part of Theatre in the Park's summer season.

**February 21, 2009 -- Illinois College,
Jacksonville**

"Lincoln and the Poetry of Walt Whitman," a

piece for band and chorale composed for the Bicentennial, will receive its world premiere here. It will feature the Illinois College Concert Choir, the MacMurray College Choir, and the Jacksonville High School Concert Choir.

These are just a few of the numerous Lincoln Bicentennial events taking place in Illinois throughout the 2009 celebration year. To learn more about these events and others, go to:

www.lincoln200.net.



Lincoln's Best Quality

Wouldn't it be interesting if we could ask Abraham Lincoln what he thinks about how we view him today. He was often a humble man; would he think our reverence of him was folly? Would he think we got it all wrong? Would he point out his flaws, whether perceived or real? Or would he look at contemporary society and, by comparison, uncharacteristically agree with us?

Of course, we'll never know. What we do know is the man, while very human, had qualities that many of his contemporaries admired and that we still do today. He had so many good qualities it's hard to say which was his best. So we made the experts do that.

Here are their thoughts about what was Lincoln's best quality and why:

"Lincoln was a great writer, a quality that in his case emanated from also being a great thinker. Many great thinkers are not great or even good writers, but the combination of Lincoln's sound reasonableness, his humor, his fairness, and his insight into human nature along with his lapidary prose was put to service in such a way that we now honor him for both abilities. Yet it is the writing that allows us to see the inner mind from this distance today."

James Cornelius

Lincoln Curator, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

"One is tempted to say 'empathy,' which enabled Lincoln to genuinely feel others' pain; or 'humor,' which gave him a way to endure the tragedies of war; or his enormous talent as a writer, which made it possible for him to communicate, as he once put it, 'to all time to come.' Yet in the end, not to

sound glib, I'd say his most important quality was his extraordinary physical health: it allowed him to work long and excruciating hours without rest or respite -- four years that would have been unendurable for a person with a less robust constitution."

Harold Holzer

Lincoln author and Senior Vice President for External Affairs, Metropolitan Museum of Art

"(Lincoln's best quality was) his honesty, his great native ability. His IQ must have been near the genius grade, he had a phenomenal memory. Some of his colleagues complained that (as a lawyer) he tried to avoid litigation by getting his clients to settle their disputes. I would think his great honesty and devotion to the truth were his best qualities, and his common sense. Lincoln was the most uncommon of common men."

Wayne Temple

Lincoln author and Chief Deputy Director, Illinois State Archives

"I think that Lincoln's best quality was his humility and his ability to admit to and learn from mistakes. It seems that there was no ego in Lincoln. He was willing and glad to defer to others for a greater good. He was not interested in accolades for himself, but was always ready with a 'Congratulations' to those who accomplished something for which to be proud. These qualities may have been the keys to his success!"

Timothy P. Townsend

Lincoln Home National Historic Site Historian

"I think, for me, (his best quality) is something he wasn't born with and didn't have when he was younger, but that he eventually achieved, and that

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is his perspective. I think he became a very shrewd, deliberate thinker who was not impetuous, who was wary of being too quick to react, and took his time to decide.

He had the ability to find a perspective, it wasn't ego-centric, but it was focused on many considerations. I think this was extremely valuable to him, because he was frequently in the company of people who had strong opinions and were very definite about things they thought ought to be done, but they didn't always harmonize with other considerations. Lincoln was a guy who trained himself to take some time, to think things through, and consider all options so that he could come to a conclusion that's very surprising. For instance, he put people in his cabinet who had abused him and said terrible things about him, but he put them in there because he thought they were the best people; I'm thinking of (Edwin) Stanton in particular (who became his Secretary of War).

Lincoln could do things that most of us would find very, very hard to do because we're so ego-centric. We tend to think in terms of what you said about me. But Lincoln had learned that it was better to find a broader perspective than just the personal or even just the immediate, that it was better to think in terms of what the best decision was for the long term."

Douglas Wilson

Lincoln author and Co-director of the Lincoln Studies Center at Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois



Memorials

Former Democratic state lawmaker Thaddeus Lechowicz passed away in his home on Chicago's northwest side on January 5. He served in the Illinois House from 1969 until 1983 and was assistant majority leader. In 1983 he began serving in the Illinois Senate and did so until 1993. Mr. Lechowicz also served as a Cook County Board Commissioner. He was 70.

John J. Nimrod, a Republican Illinois State Senator from 1973 to 1983, died January 4. A World War II veteran of Assyrian descent, Mr. Nimrod was very involved in Assyrian issues and communities throughout the world. He was 86.

On December 26, Democratic State Representative Wyvetter Younge died in St. Louis. She was a lawyer who lived in East St. Louis, an area she represented in the Illinois House of Representatives for 34 years. Rep. Younge was 78.

Tim L. Hall, a former U.S. Representative, passed away on November 12 in LaGrange. He represented the 15th District in Congress as a Democrat from 1974 to 1976. Mr. Hall was also a teacher, Lincoln scholar, and World War II veteran. He was 83.

In late November, William "Bill" Shaw died. He served as a Democratic Illinois State Representative from 1983 to 1993 and then served as an Illinois State Senator from 1993 to 2003.



Transitions

In late November, Governor Rod Blagojevich named **Dean Martinez**, former Secretary of the Illinois Department of Professional and Financial Regulation, his third Deputy Governor. Martinez is the first Latino to hold the position. Michael McRaith, the former director of IDPFR's Division of Insurance, became the new Secretary of the Department.

Also in November, **John Filan** became the Executive Director of the Illinois Finance Authority. Formerly, he was the State's Chief Operating Officer.



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